Work Health and Safety Committee (WHSC)

25 April 2024 at 1:35pm
Online meeting held via Microsoft Teams

Minutes

Present Members:
Aimie Chapple, Vice-President (Operations) (Convenor); Jeremy Barraud; Hayley Boakes; Kate Boldry; Dr Theo Bryer; Sonia Buckingham; Dr Joanna Carrington; Dr Alun Coker; Adrien Cooper; Donna Dalrymple; Ian Dancy; Professor Fiona Ducotterd; Joanne English; Megan Gerrie; Keith Harvey; Dr Ralph Hick; Max Hill; Damian Johnson; Tansy Jones; Henry Killworth; David Ladd; Portia Lamb; Dr Giulia Massaro; Professor Ivan Parkin; Danny Patel; Eira Rawlings; Dr Kerstin Sander; Dr Rob Wilson.

Apologies:
Sandra Bond; Colin Byelong; Ahmad Ismail; Professor John Kelsey; Denise Long; Mary McHarg; Deb Nichols; Joanne Tapper.

In attendance:
Jonathan Blackman; Liz Milner (for minute 4); Rohan Perera (on behalf of Deb Nichols); Claire Rowlinson (for minute 4); George Savol (for minute 5).

Officer(s):
Alex Brace (Secretary); Olivia Whiteley.

Part I: Preliminary Business

26.   Convenor's Introduction

26.1. The Convenor welcomed Alex Brace as incoming Secretary to Work Health and Safety Committee (WHSC). The Convenor expressed thanks to the previous secretary Jonathan Blackman.

26.2. The Convenor also welcomed Jeremy Barraud to his first meeting as a representative for Research, Innovation & Global Engagement (RIGE).

27.   Minutes of the last meeting (3-25)

27.1. WHSC approved the minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2024.

28.   Matters Arising (3-26)

28.1.   Arising from minute 16.2, WHSC noted the Student and Campus Experience Portfolio Team had taken on responsibility to review the audit of rest and eating facilities in the Bloomsbury campus.

28.2.   Arising from minute 16.3, Ian Dancy, Chair of Work Operational Health and Safety Sub-Committee, provided an update on unresolved issues regarding rest and eating facilities at the Institute of Education noting that this action predominantly concerned the use and return of the Lawton room. WHSC noted this had taken longer than expected but would be moving ahead. WHSC requested an update at the next meeting.

Water Hygiene Management Plan
28.3.   Arising from minute 17.2, WHSC noted that Chemical Safety Sub-Committee would review whether the monitoring of waste streams from BSU units was compliant with the new regulations. It was agreed that Adrien Cooper, Chair of Fire Safety Sub-Committee & Infrastructure Safety Sub-Committee, would investigate and report back at the next meeting.

UCL East LEV/chemical waste management
28.4.   Arising from minute 21.1, WHSC noted the local exhaust ventilation (LEV) and chemical waste management problems at UCL East had continued and laboratories had requested compensation from UCL. It was also noted that Master's students had been unable to work due to the problems. WHSC requested an update at the next meeting.

28.5.   WHSC requested for the delays to be added to the lessons learnt which would be reviewed by the UCL East Programme Board.

Part II: Strategic Items for Discussion

29.   Online Harassment Toolkit (3-27)

29.1.   Claire Rowlinson, Head of HR (BEAMS), presented an update on the Online Harassment Toolkit, noting that a key area of focus was the coordination of support spread across multiple teams to remove the need for the member of staff or student to repeat their circumstances which could lead to further distress. It was also noted, in terms of managing expectations, that the toolkit had collated pre-existing support material and was not looking to resolve the issue altogether.

29.2.   Liz Milner, HR Business Partner, provided additional information about the toolkit, noting that Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed (RACI) principles had been developed to create a standard operating

process across teams. There remained some work to be done regarding raising awareness of the toolkit and WHSC members were encouraged to provide any feedback they may have.

29.3. The following points were raised in discussion:
   a. WHSC noted the risk associated with academic profiles, which had been published on the website for the start of the 2023-24 academic year, as they provided links to each individual's research which may make that individual vulnerable to online harassment dependent on the nature of their research.
   b. Donna Dalrymple, Chief People Officer, informed WHSC that any proposed policy changes regarding support for online harassment would be brought to WHSC.

30. Portable Appliance Testing Standard (3-28)

30.1. George Savol, Head of Infrastructure Safety, presented the Portable Appliance Testing Standard. It was noted that the policy would be monitored through the Target 100 (T100) Programme.

30.2. WHSC expressed concern regarding the lack of acknowledgement in the standard of the variety of the buildings at UCL and how they were serviced by different third parties and contractors. WHSC agreed to review the standard at the next meeting once this concern had been addressed.

31. Water Hygiene Management Plan (3-29)

31.1. The Chair of Fire Safety Sub-Committee & Infrastructure Safety Sub-Committee presented an update on the Water Hygiene Management Plan, noting the plan had been updated following the last meeting to include the responsibilities of the Head of the Department (WHSC Minute 17.2, 22 January 2024). It was also noted that Emma Shirbon, Assistant Director, Compliance and Performance, had communicated the plan with Departments to ensure their engagement.

31.2. WHSC approved the policy to go forward.

32. Next Steps – Workplace Health and Safety Gap Analysis (3-30)

32.1. Dr Jo Carrington, Director of Health and Safety, presented a review of the Workplace Health and Safety Gap Analysis Report (T&T Report) and Action Plan.

32.2. WHSC noted that since recommendations had been published in 2022, the landscape had changed, and a number of short-term goals had now been proposed with the intent to develop a UCL Health and Safety Strategy.

32.3. The following points were raised in discussion:
   a. WHSC noted that it would be important to manage expectations as improvements to programmes, such as the riskNET Change Programme, would not happen overnight.
   b. The Chief People Officer noted that it would be important to be mindful about the potential impact on staff members' workloads.
   c. WHSC noted that training should be targeted to members of staff who had not received any training in addition to the induction training around health and safety, whereas some senior leaders may have completed a significant amount of training.

32.4. WHSC:
   a. Noted the review of the work undertaken to address the T&T Report Gap Analysis findings.
   b. Agreed the proposed way forward: next steps and the development of a UCL Health and Safety (H&S) Strategy and support of the H&S Action Plan that encompassed the good work undertaken as part of the T&T Report response.
   c. Agreed to provide leadership and commitment to the development of the H&S Strategy and H&S Plan and to champion this in the relevant management and strategic opportunities.
   d. Agreed to provide monitoring and oversight on the development of the UCL H&S Strategy and H&S Action Plan development.

32.5. WHSC noted that the Director of Health and Safety would present the Engagement Plan at the next meeting.

33. Incident management (3-31)

33.1. Portia Lamb, Head of Safety Governance and Risk, presented a set of recommendations following a request from WHSC to scrutinise the incident management process (WHSC Minute 20.7, 22 January 2024). It was noted that the challenges had been multi-faceted and had been broken down into three distinct areas: complexity of riskNET, local management of incidents in Departments and inefficient processes in relation to Estates.

33.2. The following points were raised in discussion:
   a. The riskNET Change Programme would be for the long-term, whereas the improvements to riskNET identified in the paper would be for the short-term.
   b. WHSC requested the creation of a flow diagram to visually present the process of reporting an incident and, in particular, how different incidents should be reported.
   c. It was suggested that the single point of failure associated with the Responsible Persons Register (RPR) should be mitigated against by permitting more than one person to review the incident.

    d. There was recognition of the institutional problem around managing roles and staff data in systems often becoming outdated as a result of those systems operating in isolation.

    e. Where Departments did not have many Department Safety Officers (DSOs), this should be raised at each Faculty's Safety Committee.

    f. It was suggested that automated reminders be built into the system for late reviews if there had been no response. It was agreed that the Head of Safety Governance and Risk would investigate this with the Automation Team.

33.3. WHSC noted the findings and supported implementation of the recommendations and recorded their interest to keep informed about the progress of these recommendations.

34. Building work in the Institute of Education (3-32)

34.1. The Chair of Work Operational Health and Safety Sub-Committee presented an update on the health and safety issues arising from building work in the Institute of Education. It was noted that a standalone Operational Health and Safety Working Group had been established to discuss and respond to the issues with the Union representatives, Dr Theo Bryer and Dr Alun Coker. Feedback had continued to be received regarding 20 Bedford Way.

34.2. WHSC noted the detrimental impact of the building works on staff mental health and working conditions and the lack of a consistent point of contact to whom to report issues. The Trade Unions requested there be a mechanism to shut a down a building if it did not meet work health and safety regulations. It was agreed that an internal audit would take place to review the health and safety issues related to the significant work associated with the IoE Masterplan programme and to identify lessons learnt which would inform future plans.

34.3. WHSC noted the paper.

35. UMC Health and Safety report (3-33)

35.1. The Head of Safety Governance and Risk presented the UMC Health and Safety Report for February and March 2024. The report included new areas such as safety training figures which had been high and reflected an improvement in safety culture.

35.2. WHSC noted that the reasons behind barriers to the T100 programme were specific to each department and included approval and ownership of a system not sitting where it should within a department. It was acknowledged that the T100 model may need to be adapted to suit different ways of working and that Safety Services would support Departments going forward.

35.3. WHSC noted the report.

36.   Briefing on stress and sickness absence (3-34)

36.1. Max Hill, Director of Workplace Health, provided a briefing on the different workstreams that looked to address work-related stress following a request from WHSC at the last meeting (WHSC Minute 19.5, 22 January 2024). It was noted the Provost had requested a review of work-related stress in 2022 from which research concluded that work-related stress was a factor in Higher Education and UCL was no exception.

36.2. The following points were raised in discussion:
  a. The process of submitting a stress risk assessment, for which the second step should be to refer the member of staff to external support. It was noted that additional guidance would be available in the Managing Stress at Work Policy;
  b. Consideration of the impact of change upon mental health in the sector and the extent to which staff had been trained to respond to change which would prevent work-related stress;
  c. A suggestion that the workload project should assess where the work would go if workloads were to be reduced;
  d. Acknowledgement that the Director of Workplace Health would be involved in the development of the upcoming staff survey in the summer (led by the Organisational Development Team) which would provide useful data to benchmark against.

36.3. WHSC noted the report, recognised the importance of these workstreams and acknowledged this would be a key topic for WHSC going forward.

37.   Items for discussion from the Trade Unions (3-35)

37.1. The Trade Unions expressed concern regarding the new security operational model launched as part of the Bidvest Noonan led changes and requested a review of the security arrangements before the next meeting. It was noted that the Bidvest Noonan transformation would be and has been regularly reviewed by Operations Committee.

37.2. The Trade Unions requested a review of the guidance for managers on managing sickness absence regarding the requirement to set improvement targets which would be inappropriate for a member of staff who may have a longstanding health condition. The Chief People Officer agreed to take these comments on board but noted there may not be a review before the next academic year.

38.   Quarterly Report: Work Operational Health and Safety Sub-Committee (3-36)

38.1. WHSC received a quarterly report from the Work Operational Health and Safety Sub-Committee.

38.2. The Convenor noted that any operational issues should be flagged to the Chair of Work Operational Health and Safety Sub-Committee.

39. Quarterly Report: Radiation Safety Sub-Committee (3-37)

39.1. WHSC received a quarterly report from the Radiation Safety Sub-Committee.

39.2. The Chair of Radiation Safety Sub-Committee informed WHSC of a radiation incident not included in the report, for which investigations were ongoing. It was noted that the incident had highlighted the lack of communication between UCL stakeholders, contractors and Estates. WHSC agreed that the Chair of Fire Safety Sub-Committee & Infrastructure Safety Sub-Committee would meet with the Chair of Radiation Safety Sub-Committee to discuss this matter further.

40. Quarterly Report: Genetic Modification & Biological Safety Sub-Committee (3-38)

40.1. WHSC received a quarterly report from the Genetic Modification & Biological Safety Sub-Committee.

41. Quarterly Report: Infrastructure Safety Sub-Committee (3-39)

41.1. WHSC received a quarterly report from the Infrastructure Safety Sub-Committee and noted the report had been received by both Estates Management Committee and Estates Committee.

41.2. The Convenor noted that it would be helpful to have a report for each of the campuses to focus in on any issues specific to a particular campus.

42. Quarterly Report: Chemical Safety Sub-Committee (3-40)

42.1. WHSC received a quarterly report from the Chemical Safety Sub-Committee.

42.2. The Chair of Chemical Safety Sub-Committee reported chemical and other safety issues at Marshgate regarding joint and shared laboratories as there had not been a finalised programme or protocol for how these would operate. The Chair had met with the Dean of Engineering to try to resolve these issues.

42.3. WHSC noted that UCL had been ranked number one in Radio Chemistry in Europe and number one for Biochemistry in Europe.

43.   Quarterly Report: Fire Safety Sub-Committee (3-41)

43.1. WHSC received a quarterly report from the Fire Safety Sub-Committee.

43.2. WHSC noted that Fire Safety Sub-Committee would meet monthly going forward.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

44.   Mental Health and Wellbeing principles (3-42)

44.1. WHSC received Mental Health and Wellbeing principles.

45.   Secretariat arrangements (3-43)

45.1. WHSC received a paper on secretariat arrangements going forward.

46.   Any other business

46.1. The Director of Health and Safety reported that the Class 4 and 3B Laser HSE Laser Working Group had established that some Departments had been using high-powered class 4 and 3B lasers without a risk assessment in place. WHSC requested for these Departments to stop work immediately and recommended that this matter be brought to the attention of UMC to facilitate swift remediation.

46.2. WHSC noted there were no plans to fund Covid-19 vaccine boosters and those identified in the risk groups should be able to access the boosters through the NHS.

47.   Date of the next meeting

47.1. WHSC noted the date of the next meeting, 31 July 2024 at 1:35-4:05pm.

Alex Brace, Secretary to Work Health and Safety Committee
April 2024